

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA. Ninth Edition. American Reprint, Vol. XVI. Imp. Svo, pp. 939. Philadelphia: J. M. Stoddart & Co.

The appearance of the sixteenth volume ("Mena" to "Mosul") of this reprint, about four months after the copies of the original were delivered to American subscribers, suggests some interesting reflections upon the defects of the copyright law which Congress is now trying to mend. The Britannica has long been celebrated as one of the most elaborate and, in certain departments, one of the most thorough of all the encyclopedias. When the ninth edition was undertaken by the Edinburgh publishers an attempt was made to prevent piratical reprinting by incorporating with the new text a number of articles by American contributors. The scheme failed. An unauthorized reprint was immediately begun in Philadelphia, and has been continued in spite of all measures to stop it to this day, to crown all, we have the extra-ordinary spectacle of the Philadelphia firm actually copyrighted, "according to act of Congress," the work which they have appropriated, against the strenuous resistance of the legitimate owners. Whether this stupendous operation has been made possible by the addition of sundry footnotes and other alterations in the text or by some other device we do not know. It is at any rate a startling commentary upon the absurd and chaotic condition of the laws respecting literary property.

The publishers excuse the long delay in issuing the present volume by the plea of needing time to correct and improve the original. When they began their enterprise they promised "a reproduction, in every particular, of the English edition." "Purchasers of the reprint," they said, "will receive the work as it comes from the hands of the British edition without alteration"; and additions especially interesting to Americans will be reserved for a supplementary volume. To this plan they pledged themselves with much emphasis in the Preface to the first volume; and indeed the public would hardly have been satisfied with anything less than a faithful reprint of a work which has enjoyed for over a hundred years an exceptional and splendid reputation. But the promise of an exact "reproduction" of the original never was observed. The very earliest volumes were disfigured by bad maps, by gross errors of printing, and even by alterations. We have marked a number of very curious mistakes in the first installments of the reprint, and they are serious enough to throw doubt over the whole enterprise. For example, in describing Oriental monasteries in the article "Abbey," the original says that "the usual Eastern arrangement is exemplified in the plan of the convent of Santa Laura, Mount Athos"; and the American reprint transforms the words "Mount Athos" into "at Athens," a surprising change which can hardly pass as an ordinary typographical blunder. The article "Aeronautics" includes an elaborate mathematical discussion of the motion of balloons, in which the Italian  $\alpha$  and the Greek  $\alpha$  are both employed, in algebraic problems, standing of course for different quantities. In the original this is clear enough, but the reprint uses a font of Greek type in which the character for  $\alpha$  is identical with the Italian  $\alpha$ , and some of the equations are thus made unintelligible because there is no way of determining which letter is meant. Incomplete equipment of the printing office is probably also the cause of a dull blunder in the article "Ascar." The original gives the Anglo-Saxon form of the name of Odin, "all-father," the character which stands for the hard  $h$  in Anglo Saxon being something like a  $d$  with the limb inclined to the left and a mark across it. The American reprinter, not having this letter in his case, seems to have picked out the Roman letter which he thought looked most like it, and his choice fell upon  $\sigma$ . The omission of accents is a frequent fault; oddly enough, it is noticeable in the article "Accent"; and the misprinting of proper names, especially in geography, is annoying and misleading.

We must reserve, however, for another occasion a more particular examination of the earlier volumes of the reprint, which, so far as we have looked, seem to swarm with errors—many worse than these. If the American publishers have at last realized the need of improvement, and have devoted the long delay in the issue of the new volumes to a careful reading of the proofs, their subscribers will be well paid for waiting. But the promise of an exact reproduction of the original, "without alteration," has been formally withdrawn. The anonymous Philadelphia editor has now adopted the policy of "improving" the text, according to such light as Providence has given him. This amendment will naturally cause the subscribers' sang-mugness, since they cannot know whether the articles which appear in this reprint under the names of distinguished authorities have been tampered with or not. The American footnotes sometimes indicate useful corrections and additions, but are often trivial and uncritical. A supplementary article on "Mexico" contains a great deal of statistical and other information, but is also an illustration of editorial incapacity, since it fails to supply the most glaring deficiencies of the original; for example, neither article contains a history of Mexico; and even now, after three hands have tried at it, the article remains one of those failures which even the best encyclopedias seem fate to perpetrate. The American reprinters promise to try again in an appendix to the whole work. Perhaps if they would add a fresh article on Mexico to each of the forthcoming volumes they might finally cover the subject, besides dispelling the monotony of an unvarying alphabetic arrangement.

There is one thing more of which the subscribers have good reason to complain. The type of the reprint has been entirely altered since the work was begun, and the volumes consequently do not match—a defect which to any collector of taste must be almost intolerable.

## MARCH MAGAZINES.

The gem of the March number of *The English Illustrated Magazine* is an article by J. Comyns Carr on Sir Joshua Reynolds. It gives an engaging picture of Reynolds as a man and an excellent analysis of his art as a painter. The six engravings of Reynolds's most beautiful pictures are executed with sure and delicate skill, and are a valuable and charming part of the paper. The engraving of the portraits of the Duchess of Devonshire and her baby daughter is especially admirable. The article makes one wish that any collector of taste must be almost intolerable.

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